STATEMENT BY CHIEF MINISTER *re*: SCARCITY CONDITIONS IN THE STATE

Sri VEERENDRA PATIL.—Mr. Speaker, I beg to present briefly an assessment of the situation in the various parts of the State, the attempts made to obtain Central assistance for the implementation of an Emergency Programme prepared by the Government to meet the situation, the financial and other achievements, the difficulties encountered and also the policies which will be pursued by Government in this vital matter.

I have purposely avoided encumbering this opening speech with too much statistics as I want the problems in their broad outlines to be properly appreciated. I shall look forward to the valuable suggestions from all quarters in this House as to how the situation is to be tackled in future.

In making the statement I do not seek to maintain either that everything possible has been done or that there is ground for despair. There is no human problem that cannot be solved by determination and dedicated effort. I shall look forward to the discussion that will follow this Resolution and shall be glad to furnish such further information as may be called for during the debate on occasion when I may be called to reply to it.

The failure of the crucial August-September rains in 1967, coming as it did after two bad years in 1965 and 1966, rendered extensive kharif areas in the State vulnerable to severe distress. The position was accentuated by the failure of pre-monsoon showers in 1968 shattering hopes of a passable kharif harvest even in 1968. Heavy rainfall in the coastal areas in July 1968 gave rise to some glimmerings of hope that the monsoon would traverse the interior Districts also; but this hope again was belied. From the beginning of the current year, more than 100 of the 174 Taluks in the State are experiencing scarcity conditions in various degrees and more than half the number of 26,000 villages in the State are experiencing agricultural distress. The failure of the monsoon has shrunk the availability of employment, thereby greatly attenuating the purchasing power of the rural population.

Quite early in 1968, an approach was made to the Government of India anticipating the serious trouble that was lying ahead of the State and seeking their assistance in tackling the problem in a planned, systematic and thorough-going manner. Though this met with no immediate tangible response, a Study Team visited the State during the third week of June, 1968, and were fully briefed about the conditions obtaining in the State. A comprehensive programme for scarcity relief at a total cost of Rs. 8.3 crores as set out in the Memorandum presented to the Team was formulated. The Government of India have accepted this

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programme so far as the financing of scarcity relief works is concerned and have allotted Rs. 2.5 crores up to now to be used for carrying out scarcity relief works including soil conservation in the affected area. They have not, I am sorry to say, conceded our demands for funds in regard for what we considered to be the vital contents of our emergency programme, namely the sinking of fresh Irrigation wells and the energising of wells by extending rural electrification and supply of electrical and diesel pump-sets. These are, in our view, basic in character and will greatly make the areas now entirely depending on the monsoon to be somewhat less vulnerable even when the rainfall is less than average. The view of the Government of India at that time was that these items were in the nature of acceleration of plan projects and so had to be accommodated within the State Plan. I have, however, taken up the matter afresh at the highest level and hope to be able to secure additional assistance from the Centre even in regard to these programmes also.

A comparative study of rainfall in April, May, June and July, 1967, and the same months in 1968 indicates that while the rainfall in April and May 1968 was about normal in most of the Districts (though deficient in South Kanara and Coorg), June 1968 witnessed a significant short fall in the Districts of Shimoga, Chikmagalur, Bidar, Gulbarga, South Kanara, Dharwar and Belgaum Districts. July 1968 also proved disappointing, the deficiency being marked in Bangalore, Belgaum, Bidar, Bijapur, Hassan and Shimoga Districts. August 1968, which was the last hope for the kharif sowings brought very little rainfall in the Districts of Bangalore, Kolar, Tumkur, Chikmagalur, Mandya, Hassan, Gulbarga, Bidar, Belgaum and Dharwar, thereby deepening the shadow of distress over the entire State, excepting South Kanara and North Kanara. These two districts, however, had their full measure of trouble on account of the floods due to torrential rains which wrought havoc on more than 9,000 acres of agricultural land and brought about collapse of numerous houses, damaged public communications and also took several valuable lives.

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The collapse of the Kharif monsoon therefore has resulted in sowing operations coming to a standstill in Challakere, Hosadurga, Chitradurga, Jagalur, Hiriyur and Molkalmuru Taluks of Chitradurga District. In Sira, Pavagada, Madhugiri Taluks of Tumkur District such sowings as were done in areas which received some rains in July 1968 have either not germinated or have withered away. The same was the case in the Taluks of Gauribidanur, Bagepalli and Gudibanda of Kolar District, in Arsikere and Channarayapatna Taluks of Hassan District and in parts of Kadur and Tarikere Taluks of Chikmagalur District. The position is the same under the non-canal areas of Mandya District, Mysore District and over

the whole of Bijapur District. As a result of drying up of several major tanks not only are their atchkats bereft of crops but the water levels in the irrigation wells are dropping.

The recognised way and indeed the only feasible way in which Government can meet such a situation is by organising relief works well dispersed all over the affected area, organising emergency feeding of vulnerable groups of pre-school children and nursing the expectant mothers and by concentrated expenditure from budget grants in scarcity areas so as to swell the quantum of employment. These measures have been adopted to the maximum extent possible, though there is room and need now for amplifying the allotments for distress relief works. Sums aggregating Rs. 1,06,55,000 have been given under "64—Famine Relief" to the four Divisions, Rs. 43,50,000 to Bangalore Division, Rs. 32,50,000 to Mysore Division, Rs. 17,31,000 to Belgaum Division and Rs. 13,24,000 to Gulbarga Division. Further allotments to the Divisions are being made out of the additional Central assistance of Rs. one crore just communicated.

For Soil Conservation (contour bunding), a total sum of Rs. 87 lakhs has been sanctioned out of which an expenditure of Rs. 57,11,000 has been incurred for contour bunding 1,60,000 acres fresh area and completing incomplete works over an area of 25,000 acres.

A large number of villages in several districts have been declared as scarcity areas under Section 37 (1) of the Mysore Land Improvement Act, 1961 to enable soil conservation work to be taken up. 8,133 villages have been so declared.

The number of relief works in progress in Bangalore Division is 1,726, in Mysore Division 760, in Belgaum Division 358, and in Gulbarga Division 114. The estimated number employed on scarcity relief works is 35,000 to 40,000 per day. An equal number are estimated to be employed on Soil Conservation works per day. The number of agricultural labourers and marginal cultivators who are in need of employment and support was estimated at Rs. 21.5 lakhs in June 1968, but the present number may easily be put at twice that figure. The Deputy Commissioners of Districts have been instructed to work out integrated District relief plans taking into account the budgeted grants available with Government departments also, for providing maximum relief. They have also been told to take up works of permanent utility and employing at least 100 to 200 people. Government have agreed to finance sinking of irrigation wells at the rate of 10 irrigation wells in private holdings in each of the affected Taluks with the approval of the local authorities, 25 per cent of the cost of which (Subject to a ceiling of Rs. 5,000) will be treated as subsidy and 75 per cent as loan, if the well is successful. If the well is unsuccessful, the entire expenditure will be borne by Government. The P.W.D have been instructed to take up as many minor irrigation works out of budgeted grants as possible in the scarcity areas. In 1967-68, 153

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budgeted works estimated to cost Rs. 216.77 lakhs were ordered to be taken up in the scarcity affected areas. Three hundred and twenty-eight minor irrigation works costing below Rs. 1 lakh each at a total estimated cost of Rs. 85.86 lakhs have also been taken up. Apart from the above, 73 new minor irrigation works each costing above Rs. one lakh at a total estimated cost of Rs. 282.78 lakhs have been provided in the Budget estimates for 1968-69 and the Chief Engineer has been authorised to take up these works without delay. Deepening of existing drinking water wells is an acceped item of scarcity relief work to be met from "64 Famine Relief". P.W.D. schedule rates will be paid for deepening existing drinking water wells. Out of about 39,416 irrigation wells sanctioned under the Liberalised Rules, 29,622 wells have been completed up to the end of March, 1968. Under the C.D. Programme, out of about 19,000 irrigation wells sanctioned, about 12,000 wells have been completed. Six thousand eight hundred and fifty-three wells sanctioned under the Liberalised Rules and 5,550 wells sanctioned under the C.D. programme are in progress. Extension of time till the end of September 1968 has been granted for completion of all these wells. Further extension of time till the end of March, 1969, is under consideration.

With effect from 1st November 1965, sinking of new irrigation wells has been entrusted to the Co-operative sector through Primary Land Development Banks. The Mysore State Central Co-operative Land Development Bank has so far sanctioned 21,822 irrigation wells, out of which 5,787 wells have been completed up to the end of June, 1968.

We have also under consideration a proposal to purchase air-compressors, blasting equipment and trucks for the purpose of quick deepening of wells. Besides completing a large number of such works within a short time, these works are labour intensive also. The total cost of the proposed scheme is of the order of Rs. 23 lakhs.

Wherever scarcity of fodder is felt, the Deputy Commissioners have been authorised to procure fodder from any source of supply, either from the forest areas or from any other area within the District or from any surplus area outside the district and make it available for the cattle. The rates paid for transport of fodder per running mile are not to be in excess of the sanctioned P.W.D. rates and the transport contracts are to be invariably fixed after calling for tenders. The cost of transport of fodder is debitable to "64 Famine Relief" and is not to be recovered from the beneficiaries by including it in the cost price of fodder. However, the cost price, as such, of the fodder is to be recovered from the beneficiaries.

An Emergency Feeding Programme—a nutritious midday meal to children below five and expectant and nursing mothers in the affected parts of the eight Districts of Bangalore, Tumkur, Kolar, Chitradurga,

Hassan, Chickmagalur, Mandya and Mysore was started from March 1968 in order to forestall malnutrition in vulnerable groups and is in operation. There are 3,042 Centres catering at present to 5,64,722 persons, including school-going children in the age group of 6-11. There is scope to raise the total number of beneficiaries to 9,49,500.

Powers of suspending Land Revenue have been delegated to Deputy Commissioners of Districts under the new uniform rules for suspension and remission of Land Revenue. They have suspended Land Revenue collections in 7,000 villages. Wherever warranted such suspensions will be granted by the Deputy Commissioners. Instructions have been issued to the Deputy Commissioners of Districts of the affected area not to resort to coercive methods for recovery of loans granted by Government. In regard to Land Revenue arrears also the Deputy Commissioners are to use discretion which recovering the arrears. They are to restrict coercive steps in the affected areas only to those defaulters who are in a position to pay but deliberately fail to do so.

My colleagues and myself have toured the scarcity affected areas intensively and have seen for ourselves the difficult conditions under which our rural population is placed. We have also had opportunities of discussing with the representatives of the people, the effectiveness of the Government's efforts.

I am painfully aware of some of the defects which appear in the manner in which these programmes are worked. One disheartening thing is the slowness with which the expenditure is being incurred. It may surprise the House to learn that out of a total allotment of about Rs. 1.90 crores made available for scarcity relief works and soil conservation, the total expenditure is hardly Rs. 1.10 crores. It is not because the funds allotted are excessive, but because the officials in some cases have failed to act with imagination and are slow. I have instructed that hereafter district officials need not limit themselves to the quantum of funds placed at their disposal as ceiling for the sanction of works for execution. Because, what is ultimately spent is a fraction of the total amount sanctioned. Government have therefore suggested that relief works of an estimated cost of twice or thrice the total funds available may be authorised for execution so that relief may go to the people promptly from out of the funds available. The final expenditure will undoubtedly be limited to the funds available after bringing the works to a safe stage. I have also instructed that red tape should be cut to the minimum in this matter and larger powers be delegated to the Field Officers in the matter of sanction of these works. A Cabinet Sub-Committee has been constituted for the purpose of review of the actual achievements of programme and will keep itself in day-to-day touch with the developments all over the State.

There is still too much red tape in the matter of sanctioning of estimates, drawal of funds and disbursal which tend to slow down the pace of relief to the people. I have also heard that some middlemen

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are coming to appear in order to make illegitimate profit out of these works. I have also heard complaints that some officers entrusted with the sacred duty of implementing these programmes have proved to be men of questionable integrity. I cannot find words strong enough to condemn these persons. Government will award exemplary punishment to officers or others guilty of self-seeking in this hour of trial. The Taluk Development Boards have to play their worthy role in executing the works allotted to them.

It is not possible for the Governmental agency alone to tackle this mighty problem. In this context, I greatly welcome the helping hand extended by the Bharat Sevak Samaj which has offered to set up 'food for work' camps in the scarcity affected areas where every person, who works on approved projects, be it for common benefit or for his own benefit in his own field, will get two kgs. of wheat per day, to which will be supplemented 50 paise per day in the case of persons working on approved scarcity relief works. The total grain commitments to the Samaj in the State on this account at present is of the order of 32,000 quintals. Lists of works have already been drawn up by the various Deputy Commissioners and have been forwarded to the Bharat Sevak Samaj authorities and Government have issued orders agreeing to bear transportation costs, costs of storage and organisational expenses. I hope to be able to see the inauguration of the first of these camps near Bangalore within a couple of days. I am sure these camps will go a long way to alleviate the suffering of the unemployed agricultural labourers.

Government is aware that these measures are all just palliatives. The real remedy lies in the adoption of long term measures. We have a rough outline of what we should like to do in this regard and are seriously considering the constitution of a committee to go into this question comprehensively and to make recommendations. A better utilisation of water resources and a better exploitation of underground water, construction of percolation tanks designed to build up sub-soil water and the sinking of wells in tank ashcuts with the idea of saving tank water for a period when most tanks are likely to become dry are some of the measures that can be considered. I shall, in due course, acquaint the House with the details of this programme. We will of course require in a large measure the assistance of the Centre if we have to implement any ambitious programme of this type.

Before closing, I should like to assure the House that the entire Governmental machinery is pledged to devote itself heart and soul to tackle this problem in a mood of dedication and service so that we may be able, at least to a moderate extent, to alleviate the suffering of a large section of our rural population which is in travail as a result of unprecedented adverse seasonal conditions.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER.—The Copies of the Statement by the Chief Minister will be distributed to all the members. Now the House will adjourn and will meet after half-an-hour.

The House rose at Ten Minutes past Three of the Clock to re-assemble at Forty Minutes past Three of the Clock.

The House re-assembled at Forty-five Minutes past Three of the Clock.

[Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER in the Chair]

MYSORE STATE LEGISLATURE PROCEEDINGS (PROTECTION OF PUBLICATION) BILL, 1966.

(as passed by the Legislative Council)

(Motion to consider)

Sri K. PUTTASWAMY.—I beg to move :

"That the Mysore State Legislature Proceedings (Protection of Publication) Bill, 1966, as passed by the Legislative Council, be taken into consideration."

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER.—Motion moved :

"That the Mysore State Legislature Proceedings (Protection of Publication) Bill, 1966, as passed by the Legislative Council, be taken into consideration."

Sri K. PUTTASWAMY.—Sir, this is a very short Bill but very important Bill as far as the Press is concerned. The Central Legislature have passed the Parliamentary Proceedings (Protection of Publication) Act, 1956 (Central Act 24 of 1956) and that protects the publication in a newspaper of a substantially true report of any proceedings of either House of Parliament unless the publication is proved to have been made with malice or unless the publication is not for the public good. It also protects reports or matters broadcast by means of wireless telegraphy as part of any programme or service provided by means of broadcasting station situated in India. In the State, we do not have any such Bill. The Standing Committee of the All India Newspapers Editors Conference has recommended the enactment of a similar law by the State Legislatures so that the Press in the States may function more freely. It is also considered necessary to undertake legislation on the lines of the Central Act. This short Act has been passed by the Upper House. Now it is placed before this House for consideration.